

26 February 2021

## New Zealand Game Animal Council



# Submission on the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Areas reclassification

### 1.0 About the New Zealand Game Animal Council

The New Zealand Game Animal Council (GAC), established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013, is a statutory agency with responsibilities for, *inter alia*, advising and making recommendations (in relation to game animals) to the Minister of Conservation, raising awareness of the views of the hunting sector, and advising on and managing aspects of game animal hunting. Game animals are feral pigs, chamois, tahr, and all species of deer.

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### 2.0 Reclassification of the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Areas

The GAC endorses the proposal to reclassify the Kawarau/Remarkables conservation areas.

The GAC considers reclassification of the Kawarau/Remarkables stewardship lands would be best served by the creation of a new Conservation Park.

A conservation park would ensure the necessary layers of protection for conservation, cultural, recreation and other important values. The current classification of 'stewardship lands' are not formally identified as important for biodiversity, conservation, or recreation.

The Conservation Act section 19(1)(a) and (b) outlines that every conservation park shall be managed so that its natural and historic resources are protected; and subject to that, to facilitate public recreation and enjoyment. Reclassifying the Kawarau/Remarkables conservation area as a conservation park would ensure the balance between ecological, recreational, and cultural values are facilitated and protected.

A new conservation park would align with the network of conservation parks stretching from Marlborough to Southland. Locally, it would align with the Hawea Conservation Park, Ahuriri and Oteake Conservation Parks.

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### 3.0 Values associated with the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Areas

There are both 'significant' and 'diverse and common values' associated with this area, including:

- The western faces of the Remarkable Mountains area, which is one of the most iconic and unique mountain ranges in New Zealand made more famous by its proximity to Queenstown
  - the abundance of rocky terrain
  - some nationally threatened and at-risk plant species, however, the native species generally remain 'diverse and common' (DOC, Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area ecological values, page 11).
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- The Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area contains diverse recreational opportunities, including as a regionally significant hunting area.
- the history of gold mining in the Nevis Valley and river catchment
- The area is of high historical and cultural significance to Ngāi Tahu with walking and vehicle access providing Ngāi Tahu Whānui with regular opportunities to undertake a range of recreational activities.

Queenstown is a key tourism destination, and from that tourism comes the need for recreation spaces. Queenstown, and the surrounds, is arguably the adventure capital of New Zealand. Statistics from New Zealand Tourism show that over 1,306,572 tourists and other travellers visited Queenstown in the year ending December 2018. Many of these visitors would have spent time hiking, mountain biking, hunting, skiing, fishing, tramping, climbing, and camping in the Kawarau/Remarkables area.

The importance of recreation needs to be recognised in any decision-making process with regards to the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area.

The GAC sees it as vital that any reclassification of the area fosters recreation while providing adequate protection for environmental and cultural values. The GAC considers this balance is best achieved through the creation of a Conservation Park.

Many parts of the Kawarau/Remarkables conservation area have been grazed or have been affected by human habitation, clearance, and fire.

Over the past 30 years much of the land in question has been reclaimed through the tenure review process, with the addition of ex-pastoral leases increasing the Conservation Area to 33,085 hectares. The GAC does not consider this reclaimed land meets the criteria for the creation of a national park under the National Parks Act 1980 (section 4).

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#### **4.0 Hunting in the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Areas**

Red deer, chamois and pig hunting are popular and valued recreational activities in the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area. The Remarkables Wye Creek hunting block is an important recreational asset to hunters in the Otago and Southland regions.

Central Otago has a growing population with a high level of engagement with the outdoors. Hunters value the Remarkables/Kawarau area for its predominantly open tussock land which creates a challenging recreational hunting experience in a scenic location. The red deer, chamois and pigs harvested from the area are renowned for both high quality heads and their meat.

Quality hunting opportunities and good game animal management outcomes require well-managed recreation areas.

Security of access to public conservation lands assists hunters to play their part in the sustainable management of game animals and the protection of conservation values. To be able to legitimately access hunting areas, hunters require the ability to carry firearms, use dogs (where allowed) and use motorised transport (where appropriate).

Reclassifying the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area as a conservation park will provide for this. Reclassification as a national park will threaten, not only access to hunting areas, but the viability of the hunting resources itself.

The GAC has a statutory requirement to improve hunting opportunities and game animal management and is therefore unable to support the reclassification of the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area as a national park.

The GAC is also concerned that the Department of Conservation is not sufficiently resourced to adequately manage our existing national parks network. Adding a new national park will not only stretch existing resources even thinner but could have a detrimental impact on the management of the region's other conservation areas.

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## 5.0 Valued Introduced Species in New Zealand

*Te Mana O Te Taiao – Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020* recognises a number of introduced animal and fish species, including deer, chamois, tahr, wild pigs, salmon and trout, as being valued introduced species. These animals have become an important part of New Zealand life and require sustainable management for both their resource value and conservation impacts. For many New Zealanders, deer, chamois, tahr and wild pigs are critical to their everyday lives as they provide recreational, cultural, food gathering and commercial opportunities and are important avenues for community conservation efforts.

Deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs, are legally Wild Animals under the Wild Animal Control Act or Game Animals under the Game Animal Council Act. Collectively with other species such as trout, salmon, ducks, pheasants, quail etc. they are collectively known as valued introduced species.

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## 6.0 Summary

Taking into consideration the multiple and diverse values associated with the Kawarau/Remarkables stewardship land, the GAC submits that the creation of a new conservation park would provide an appropriate level of protection for the ecological, cultural, historic, recreational and landscape values of the area. In contrast, we believe reclassification as a national park is unnecessary to preserve conservation values, could have a detrimental impact on recreational hunting and will add to the Department of Conservation's already massive land-management burden.

If you have any queries relating to this submission, please contact me on 021688531 or at [tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz](mailto:tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz).

Yours sincerely



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